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Testimony before joint meeting of the Senate Committee on Natural Resources & Environmental Affairs and House Natural Resources, Great Lakes, Land Use, and Environment Committee in support of scheduled sunset of beach grooming provisions of Act 14

May 11, 2006

Good morning. My name is Kelly Dardzinski, and I am an advocate for Environment Michigan, the new home of PIRGIM's environmental work. Thank you for the opportunity to testify regarding the practice of removing vegetation from coastal wetlands.

With the completion of the Department of Environmental Quality's study on the impacts of beach grooming, the objective and impartial science is now in, and the results are clear: removing the vegetation from our coastal wetlands has devastating ecological effects on Great Lakes fish, wildlife, and water quality.

As the study demonstrated, removing temporarily exposed vegetation during periods of lower water levels has at least three harmful effects: it reduces or eliminates habitat for important fish species including yellow perch and bass; it promotes the spread of invasive species such as loosestrife and phragmites; and it eliminates the beneficial natural functions that undisturbed coastal vegetation performs, including filtering pollutants and slowing erosion.

At a time when the existing effects of harmful runoff, pollution, erosion, and alien invasive species in the Great Lakes will take an estimated \$20 billion to remedy, we can ill afford to exacerbate these problems by allowing the removal of nature's own cleaning mechanisms. Therefore, Environment Michigan urges the Legislature to follow the DEQ's recommendation to allow the beach grooming provisions of Act 14 to sunset as scheduled.

Thank you for your consideration.